

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PRAIA
AMEMBASSY BISSAU

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, CV, PU

SUBJECT: ERNESTINA/MORRISSEY

1. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY REGARDING EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE SCHOONER ERNESTINA/MORRISSEY, NOW IN MINDELO, AND TO TRANSFER TITLE TO THE SHIP TO AN ENTITY IN THE US.

2. MICHAEL PLATZER A UN OFFICER AND, IN A PRIVATE CAPACITY, THE PRIME MOVER IN THIS EFFORT, EXPECTS TO BE IN MINDELO ON OR ABOUT JULY 1 AND TO PROCEED TO BISSAU ON OR ABOUT JULY 5 BEFORE CONTINUING TO MOZAMBIQUE ON UN BUSINESS. HIS PRINCIPAL QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT THE LUMBER ORDERED FROM BISSAU FOR THE ERNESTINA HAS ARRIVED IN MINDELO. WHEN THE LUMBER ARRIVES, PLATZER EXPECTS A CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND SHIPWRIGHT, JIM BRIGHTON, WHO HAS RESTORED 5 SHIPS TO DATE, TO GO TO MINDELO FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS TO DRAW UP A WORK PLAN FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE ERNESTINA. BRIGHTON MAY BE ACCOMPANIED BY SOMEONE ELSE FROM HIS
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YARD. BRIGHTON'S TRIP WILL BE FINANCED EITHER BY THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION OR BY A US PRIVATE CITIZEN. THE NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAS REQUESTED A GRANT FROM THE TRUST FOR THIS PURPOSE. PLATZER ALSO EXPECTS A DUTCH SHIPBUILDER,

FRANZ MEIJER, TO SAIL TO CAPE VERDE WITH THE NECESSARY

TOOLS AND TO REMAIN IN CAPE VERDE UNTIL THE RESTORATION OF THE ERNESTINA IS COMPLETED WHICH IS EXPECTED TO TAKE SIX MONTHS AT THE MOST. MIEJER'S PARTICIPATION WILL BE FINANCED BY THE NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN NEW YORK.

3. WHEN THE RESTORATION IS COMPLETED, PLATZER HOPES TITLE TO THE SHIP WILL BE CONVEYED DIRECTLY TO THE "SCHOONER ERNESTINA COMMISSION" WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE APPOINTED SHORTLY BY THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS. THE 5 MEMBER COMMISSION HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ITS MEMBERSHIP HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE GOVERNOR. HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY WILL PROBABLY PRESS FOR CONVEYANCE TO THE SOCIETY AND A SUBSEQUENT TRANSFER TO THE COMMISSION. THE SOCIETY THINKS THAT MORE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE VESSEL WILL RESULT FROM CONVEYANCE TO A NATIONAL AS OPPOSED TO A STATE ORGANIZATION IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.

4. PLATZER EXPECTS THE ERNESTINA TO SAIL FOR MASSACHUSETTS EITHER BY WAY OF THE CARRIBEAN OR DIRECTLY IN THE SPRING OF 1979.

5. THE DEPARTMENT SUPPORTS THIS EFFORT TO RESTORE A SCHOONER OF HISTORIC INTEREST AND A SHIP WHICH SYMBOLIZES UNCLASSIFIED

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MUCH OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAPE VERDE AND THE US.

6. PLATZER WILL CALL AT THE EMBASSY EITHER AT PRAIA OR BISSAU DURING HIS TRIP. AF/W WOULD APPRECIATE A REPORT OF HIS FINDINGS.

7. IF EITHER ADDRESSEE IS AWARE OF THE STATUS OF THE LUMBER DELIVERY TO MINDELO, WE WOULD APPRECIATE A REPORT SOONEST.

8. WE ARE RESEARCHING PROBLEMS THAT MAY ARISE IF VESSEL WERE CONVEYED TO US GOVERNMENT FOR FURTHER TRANSFER TO MASSACHUSETTS STATE COMMITTEE. IN MEANTIME POSTS SHOULD NOT MAKE OR IMPLY ANY COMMITMENT REGARDING POSSIBLE ROLE OF US GOVERNMENT VANCE

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